

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a dark brown color, framing the central text.

Finding A Light (No More Darkness)

*Growing Up (So Much
Harder Than The*

Krasimer

Finding A Light (No More Darkness) by Krasimer

Series: [Growing Up \(So Much Harder Than The Movies\)](#) [2]

Category: IT (2017), IT - Stephen King

Genre: And for Henry Bowers stabbing and attacking Mike, Character Death Fix, Eddie Lives, Everybody Lives, Everyone Has Issues, Everyone Is Alive, Everyone is alive and they win against Jackass the Clown, GOOD THING THEY'RE ALIVE TO GIVE EACH OTHER HUGS, Implied/Referenced Suicide, M/M, Mike needs hugs, Rating is for the mention of violent happenings, Stan Lives, Stan Needs Hugs, Suicide Attempt, They Win!, adult losers club, but he's okay I swear

Language: English

Characters: Mike Hanlon, Stanley Uris, The Losers Club (IT)

Relationships: Mike Hanlon/St Stanley Uris, Minor or Background Relationship(s)

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-10-26

Updated: 2017-10-26

Packaged: 2020-01-29 13:58:54

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings, No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 3,021

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Stan had asked him once,

(Before, when they were young and stupid and god Mike had loved him)

if his grandfather still called the town cursed. Mike has to agree with his grandfather -- Derry is cursed and no one should ever set foot in it again.

(But the group clusters in, sitting around a table, and Mike knows they are missing someone.

The others haven't mentioned him, probably haven't even realized

they're missing one. They might not even remember him, not now and not ever.)

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Of course the boy he remembers is gone, Mike thinks as he watches the rest of the Losers Club trickle in.

The restaurant is homey, nice and warm, a good place to meet up and catch up and see each other. Neutral and just about as far from the sewers they will eventually have to enter as they can get. Nothing bad ever happened to them here, it isn't a relic from their childhood. It remains untainted by the monster that Mike has never forgotten but the rest all ran from.

Eddie and Richie walk in and see each other and he can see the moment the dam breaks.

They rush to each other's sides and grab onto each other like they need it more than they need air. Given the way they had always acted when they were kids, thirteen and facing down a darkness and death like never before, Mike is almost certain that's true. Richie and Eddie just go together, no matter what. If they were in a different century, a different decade, whatever, they would still be together.

Even with their memories having been yanked out of their heads and only coming back when he had reached out for them, when Derry had been reconnected to them in the form of a phone call, they probably still gravitated towards each other.

But the group clusters in, sitting around a table, and Mike knows they are missing someone.

The others haven't mentioned him, probably haven't even realized they're missing one. They might not even remember him, not now and not ever.

Mike takes a deep breath and speaks with them, talks about their shared history, shares a grin with Bev, claps Bill on the shoulder and pretends that he isn't hollow inside. The boy who had tasted like summer, that hint of turning autumn, he is gone. Even if he looked at the situation from a purely analytical stance, they had needed seven to beat It last time. They do not have the seven.

Stan is a missing piece.

God, he wishes he had actually gotten out of Derry with him.

Stan had gone off to the internship at his uncle's firm, gone on to college, started a successful life of his own. They had kept in contact, he had sent letters so often that Stan had probably grown sick of them, and then...

And then.

His grandfather had gotten sick. Had started needing him to help out more. He had kept calling Stan, writing to him. Stan had talked to him steadily and happily for the first year. Had written letters back, had answered the phone with excitement. It had been eight months after that, Stan had turned twenty, when Mike called him and Stan didn't know who he was.

Like Derry had been yanked out of his mind so firmly that everyone who still lived there had stopped existing for him.

Like Mike had stopped existing for him.

He'd had to re-live that feeling again when he called Stan back in as an adult. Stan had picked up the phone and Mike had introduced himself and Stan hadn't known who he was until Mike had mentioned Derry and the goddamned monster that had followed them for months and months in their nightmares after that.

Stan had gone quiet after that.

Had only responded in sounds, not words.

Had said something about 'maybe'.

And then Stan Uris had ended the call and Mike had known he wasn't going to see him. He hadn't known that Stan would kill himself, but he had known he wouldn't come back to Derry. Stan, the almost too-thin boy who had been terrified of everything after their encounter with It. He had left Derry with scars all around the sides of his face and a darkness in his mind.

Mike still wishes he had gone with him.

He guesses that one of them was needed to remain behind, an anchor of sorts for the others, but he hates that it had to be him. He had promised Stan, had sworn never to leave him alone.

He'd had a wife, Mike knew that. He didn't know if they'd had children or not but none of the others had and he suspected it was the same for Stan. Something had just prevented children for all of them, some memory of why children would never be safe, he supposed.

He watches Richie and Eddie roughhousing a little, Richie getting his hands on Eddie and ruffling his hair. Those two never could stay away from each other and he remembers how small and fragile Eddie had looked after Richie had moved away. Like a part of him was being torn out.

With a small laugh bubbling out of him, Mike suspects that they will be together at the end of this. No more forgetting Eddie Kaspbrak for Richie, no more forgetting Richie Tozier for Eddie.

Bill looks at him, distracted from the conversation with Ben and Bev, halfway towards admonishing Richie and Eddie for acting like that in a public place. His mouth curls into a sympathetic sort of smile, his eyes knowing as he meets Mike's gaze. Stan was one of his best friends, Mike remembers. He isn't the only one feeling the empty space.

Bill actually remembers.

Bev shrieks a little as Richie nearly tumbles into her, the sound turning into laughter as she pushes him back onto his feet, and Bill looks away again. They are older now, they have an adult awareness of how dangerous everything they need to go through is going to be.

This is the closest Mike can get to mourning Stan, for now.

They have other things to focus on, a battle to plan, a monster to hunt. They need to destroy It this time, before It destroys them. Stan is already gone because of It. Mike needs to focus.

He doesn't really get the chance to mourn.

The hit to the head keeps him dizzy and unfocused but he still feels the pain of the knife going into his gut. Henry Bowers is nearly a ghost above him, the same hovering face twisted in a vicious anger that wants him dead. Mike can still see the teenager he had been, overlaid on the adult face like an afterimage.

And then all Mike knows is the pain as his body crumples and the world fades into darkness around him.

"Sir?"

That is the voice of a woman, Mike thinks as he tries to push through the haze of darkness in his head. He doesn't recognize it, doesn't know who she could be. His entire body is sore and he is exhausted. Head throbbing like it is going to explode, Mike manages to open his eyes.

A nurse is standing next to the bed he's in.

"Good morning sir," she greets him with a small smile. "Could you tell me your name?"

"Mike..." he pauses, closes his eyes for a minute as his head spins. "Hanlon. I work as a historian and a librarian," he pauses again as he unsticks his tongue from the roof of his mouth. He has not had water in a too-long time. "In Derry, Maine. I'm forty-one. Born in nineteen-seventy-six."

"Very good," the nurse looks at her clipboard, trailing her finger down to make sure he's right. "I'm afraid you've had some very close calls, Mister Hanlon. Don't worry though, we're going to make sure you're alright. You've been airlifted out of Derry, given the circumstance. Is there anyone we should call? You haven't got an emergency contact listed, so we didn't know who to contact." She smiles at him again and he wants to laugh. Her face is kind, her eyes exhausted, and she seems like the sort of person who would wake up

to watch the sunrise.

In short, she seems like a good person.

“Should be a man named Bill in my phone,” he half-slurs the words. “Denbrough. Either him or Beverly Marsh,” he looks at her and sighs. “I hope I didn’t worry them too much.”

The nurse laughs a little, smiles even wider at him. “Alright, I’ll get that done. My name is Lizzy, by the way. You’re currently in the ICU, just to make sure you’re alright. Since you woke up pretty easily and you were able to answer questions – without prompting, that’s good – you might be getting out of here in as little as a week.”

“Good,” Mike nods. He spots a shadow outside of his door and fear grabs at his heart, clenches a fist around him and squeezes until he almost can’t breathe. “Who is that?”

Lizzy looks and her eyes go a little wide. “That’s a police officer, Mister Hanlon. You were in recovery at the hospital in Maine and then there was a man who attacked you and so you were flown here and we’ve got a security team on your door. They switch out every eight hours or so.”

Mike nods and Lizzy smiles again and then he is exhausted and she lets him sleep.

The machines lull him into rest, the quiet beeping soothing in a way.

When he next wakes up, the guard at the door has changed and Lizzy is talking with a doctor in the hallway.

“Oh, good to see you awake, Mike!” Lizzy is less exhausted-looking now and he doesn’t know how long he was asleep. “We’re just talking about a few things,” she looks at the doctor. “Because of the security risk, we have to be a bit more careful with you. We don’t know if the person trying to attack you has been caught or not.”

They both crowd into his room and explain it to him.

He finds out he is in an entirely different state. His friends have been contacted and they will be arriving soon. He has been asleep for five hours. Mike nods along as they talk to him.

“And there was one more thing,” Lizzy goes to the table with his things on it and pulls out his phone. “You have a list of people in your phone and...I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have looked, but one of the names is Stanley Uris.” She looks startled now, sort of on edge as she approaches him with his phone. “Would that be a man with curly brown hair and blue eyes, pale skinned?”

Mike feels his heart leap into his throat and he nods.

“We’ve got a patient matching that description and with that name,” Lizzy looks at the doctor. “There are some questions for you, from the police. Stanley Uris was admitted recently. They’re hoping you can help identify him. Considering your own state, the police are treating your case and his like they’re related.”

He wants to tell her they’re not, he knows they’re not, but he can’t speak.

All he had heard was a phone call from Stan’s wife, calling him back and demanding to know what he had told her husband. Telling him that Stan had slit his wrists open and bled himself out. She had given him the impression that Stan had died, then and there.

But Stan is alive, if their other patient is who he is believed to be.

Even without seeing him, he knows. Stanley Uris, the one who had been afraid to be alone or anywhere near a sewer ever again, is alive.

Mike is patient, waits until he can move even slightly on his own.

He will see Stan again.

The questions are about their group of friends being targeted by a hate group.

Mike answers them as best he can, makes no mention of the

nightmare of a situation they'd been in.

Stan is pretending to be asleep when Mike is able to find his room.

He's in a wheelchair, trapped for now, because of the stitches in his stomach, but the nurses let him move around the hospital. He has Lizzy guiding him, proof that they knew each other from the photos the Losers Club had, and his heart deciding to move into his throat permanently.

He knocks on the door and waits.

"Hm..." Stan opens his eyes, disgruntled, and doesn't move or turn to look. "What now?"

Mike looks at him, remembers how scared he had been as a kid, how haunted he had looked when the Losers started leaving Derry. "We won," he says quietly.

Stan's head twists around so quickly that Mike is afraid he's going to break his neck. "What?"

"We," Mike rolls himself a little further into the room, stopping just a few feet from the bed. "Won." Stan is hooked up to a great many more things than Mike was and he can see a blood bag on the stand, disconnected and empty. His arms are wrapped in bandages and Mike can almost see the violence Stan did to himself. "Our friends fought against It and won."

"...Dead?"

Mike nods and watches the most beautiful smile spread across Stan's face. Relief and happiness and the most relaxed Stan has ever been in front of Mike when he wasn't asleep. "The others are all in the waiting room right now. Ben and Bev and Richie and Bill."

"I," Stan makes a noise in the back of his throat. "What about Eddie?"

"Still in the ICU, being kept for observation. They're going to move

him to a normal room soon enough and then he has to go to physical therapy.”

“The fuck happened to him?”

He almost wants to laugh at the expression on Stan’s face. “The damned thing took his arm. He nearly died. Richie beat the shit out of It, they ripped out It’s heart, and Richie doubled back for Eddie. He’d put a tourniquet on his arm so he wouldn’t bleed out. I still,” he stops and looks at Stan’s arms again. “You nearly died too.”

“What happened to you?” Stan looks exhausted again, doesn’t seem to want to talk about himself.

“Bowers.” Mike sees Stan’s upper lip curl, suddenly angry and almost snarling. “He escaped his mental hospital and came to kill us. We think he might have been directed by the damned thing. The reason I’m not at the Derry hospital is that someone there tried to kill me as well. They had me flown here so that they could have a police officer guarding me at all times. Derry is too small for that. Eddie was moved too, once they realized his name was on a list found in Bowers’ room.”

Stan grunts, nodding slowly.

“Could you tell me what happened?” Mike asks it quietly, afraid of startling the other man. “To you, I mean.”

“...You called me back,” Stan looks at him flatly, looking nearly dead as he does. “I remembered in an instant and I just...” he shudders and tears well up in his eyes. “I couldn’t face it, Mike, I wasn’t- I’m not strong enough for that. I was so afraid of It then and the fact that I managed to forget It and grow up and move on and I just-”

His voice catches and the tears are rolling down his cheeks and Mike wheels himself close enough to connect their fingers.

Stan holds onto him like he is a lifeline.

“My wife left me,” Stan adds in, hoarse and exhausted and Mike wants to wrap his arms around him and never let go. “Patricia. She told me she couldn’t handle this, she couldn’t deal with me being...”

he lets out a rattling breath. "Like this. She still loves me but she can't," he shudders, his eyes squeeze shut. "We were trying to have kids and that wasn't happening and I know, the tests said nothing was wrong, but I know something inside of me was the reason we couldn't. I don't know if I was still afraid, even without remembering, or if I knew It was still out there and kids were never going to be safe or what, but..."

"Hey," Mike left their hands connected, Stan's thin fingers twisted with his, his other coming up to brush Stan's hair out of his face, swipe a tear off his cheek. "Do you remember?"

"...Remember?"

"I'm not leaving you to be alone," Mike reminds him, a small smile on his face. "Things kind of suck, right now. We're all a little broken, you're not doing too well, but I am not leaving you. Already did that once, I think Derry needed someone to keep track and remember while the others couldn't. The town chose me, for whatever reason, but that's over now."

Stan's hand squeezes his and he thinks of an afternoon spent together, kisses shared and curled in bed. "You promise?"

"I promise," Mike hesitates for a moment before lifting Stan's hand and kissing his knuckles. Gentle and soft and making sure to not tug on his IV. "You're stuck with me, Stanley. Get used to that."

Stan laughs then and Mike wants to bottle the sound and keep it for a rainy day.

They survived, Mike thinks as the Losers gather in another restaurant. They aren't in Derry anymore, they're in Georgia. Stan's house is just a few streets away and they will be staying there for a few days to actually catch up and freely feel the relief of being safe from It.

Eddie smacks his left hand into Richie's shoulder and refuses to move more than a foot from his side.

He has to learn how to do everything again, at least until he gets a

prosthetic, but he's alive. Richie seems to be the happiest with that fact, constantly mussing the smaller man's hair. Bill and Ben and Bev are all talking about something, Ben and Bev holding hands and smiling at each other every few minutes. Eddie and Richie are adding to that conversation with jokes (Richie) and actual questions (Eddie).

Mike smiles, turning to nudge his chin against Stan's shoulder.

"Look at that," he grins and Stan grins back. "We all survived." He chuckles and Stan lets out a little giggle and everything is right in the world.

Author's Note:

I needed to finish it. I hope you guys enjoyed this one.